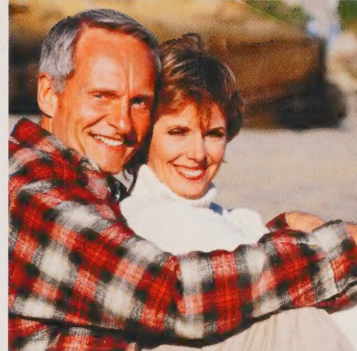


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# On the Road to Quitting

Understanding and changing your relationship with cigarettes



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Canada





## On the Road to Quitting

Understanding and changing your relationship with cigarettes

Health Canada  
Tobacco Control programme  
Ottawa K1A 0K9

**1-866-318-1116**

An interactive online version of this publication  
is available at **[www.GoSmokefree.ca](http://www.GoSmokefree.ca)**

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# Choosing to quit:

It's about knowing who you really are and deciding what you want.

As a smoker, you have a relationship with cigarettes.

Is it really a good one? Cigarettes may give you moments of comfort, but they can also control you and even kill you.

There is a way out!

This guide will help you prepare and act to reduce your need for tobacco and your desire for cigarettes. Take the time to think about the issues and follow the steps, then move on at your own pace. If you do, you will be able to set and reach your goal.

Something to think about...

- Almost 4 in 5 people over the age of 15 years old in Canada are non-smokers.
- Smoking is no longer socially acceptable for the majority of Canadians.
- Most ex-smokers wish they had quit much earlier-or never started at all-and some even say that quitting wasn't as hard as they thought it would be.

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Think of other tough decisions that you have faced in the past-and how good it felt once you made the right choice.

**Quitting will make you feel like this and much more: strong, healthy and confident!**





## Did you know?

- You may associate relaxation, time to yourself, energy and weight control with smoking, but there is nothing you enjoy about cigarettes that you can't get more of without smoking.
- A pack-a-day smoker can spend more than \$2,500 a year on cigarettes!
- Thousands of Canadians just like you will quit smoking for good this year.



# Quitting will improve your life in ways you will see and feel

## You smoke for many reasons.

It may be a habit or an addiction, or both. You may like how it makes you look or feel. It may help you relax, give you energy, give you time to yourself, or distract you from stress. It may be something you share with others. You may even think it helps to control your weight.

## But you have better reasons to quit.

Whatever it may give you, smoking takes away much more. It can control you. It seriously harms your health, each time you light up. It can lead to deadly cancers, chronic lung and heart disease, and an early and painful death. These are proven facts.

## It's not just about your health.

Quitting will give you a real and powerful sense of self-control...right now! You will feel, perform and look better. You won't have to leave your house or workplace just to smoke. Your relationships with non-smokers will improve. Your sense of taste and smell will improve. You will be a better role model for children. You won't have to worry about other people being exposed to second-hand smoke from your cigarettes.

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Take a few moments now to think about what you want to achieve by quitting, including how you would like to improve your health, image, relationships and finances.







# It's the single best thing you can do to improve your life and health

Quitters immediately begin to reduce the risks of developing heart disease, cancer and breathing problems.

Former smokers live longer than those who continue to smoke. For example, those who quit before age 50 have only half the chances of dying from a smoking-related disease in the next 15 years compared with those who continue to smoke.

The health benefits of quitting occur for all types of smokers, men and women, young and old. In fact, you'll feel better within 24 hours of quitting:

- Within 8 hours, the carbon monoxide level drops in your body and the oxygen level in your blood increases to normal
- Within 48 hours, your chances of having a heart attack start to go down and your sense of smell and taste begin to improve
- Within 72 hours, your lung capacity increases and breathing becomes easier
- Within 2 weeks to 3 months, blood circulation improves and your lung functioning increases up to 90 percent
- Within 6 months, coughing, sinus congestion, tiredness and shortness of breath improve
- Within 1 year, your risk of smoking-related heart attack is cut in half
- Within 10 years, the risk of dying from lung cancer is cut in half
- Within 15 years, the risk of dying from a heart attack is equal to a person who never smoked.



## Did you know?

- Changing just one or two of your smoking routines can give you the control and motivation to change for good.
- Cutting down gradually on the number of cigarettes you smoke each day will help lessen your dependence.





# You can change your smoking habits

Smoking is probably something you do without thinking.

If you're like most smokers, you probably reach for a cigarette automatically when you do or feel certain things, when you're with other smokers, or as part of your daily routines.

Learn your smoking "triggers."

When do you routinely smoke? Drinking coffee or alcohol, relaxing after work or a meal, talking on the phone, driving or feeling stressed or angry are common smoking "triggers"—things that may make you want to smoke. Try using the Tracking Card inserted into this guide to note what you are doing and feeling each time you reach for a cigarette.

Break the connection between smoking and your routines.

Anticipate your triggers. Try to delay lighting up by keeping your hands and mouth busy with other things. Drink a glass of cold water, brush your teeth, or enjoy a low-calorie snack. Stretch, take a walk, or talk with a non-smoking friend.

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Think about the times when you almost always reach for a cigarette. Then, whenever these things, feelings or situations occur, ask yourself: "Do I really need this cigarette? Do I even really want to smoke? Can I wait or just do something else?"





## Did you know?

- Nicotine is highly addictive but not all smokers experience prolonged cravings or other withdrawal symptoms.
- Cravings and urges rarely last longer than a few minutes. You can see past them and work through them.
- Three or four days after quitting, withdrawal symptoms diminish and almost always disappear within ten days.



# You can break your nicotine addiction

## Your brain has learned to depend on nicotine.

This highly addictive chemical in tobacco makes you feel energized, alert or calm. Over time, your brain gets used to it. It thinks the extra stimulation is normal. So when nicotine leaves your system, soon after smoking, your brain begins to crave it. You feel uncomfortable without it and get the urge to smoke again.

## You can teach it not to.

As you smoke less, your brain also gets used to having less nicotine. You may get cravings or feel irritable or “down” for a while, but these things never last long. The more cravings you resist, the fewer you will have. They will soon be much shorter and weaker. Your brain will soon naturally replace the artificial “lift” you got from nicotine. This will happen no matter how long or how much you have smoked.

## The four “Ds”:

- Delay lighting up when you get the urge to smoke.
- Distract yourself until the craving stops with thoughts and activities that take your mind off smoking.
- Drink water to occupy your hands and mouth.
- Deep breathing will help you stay focused and relaxed. It's simple and it works!

## You have what it takes!

Have you ever had a bad headache? Have you ever been stuck in traffic? You have already dealt with things that are uncomfortable and that you can't control! And in a way, cravings are easier, because you can choose to do other things—like counting to 100 or going for a walk.





## Did you know?

- When you focus on something that you have to do, you often see it as something that will be hard to do. You may think of how much effort it will take.
- When you focus on something that you want to do, you see it as something that you can do. You think about "how"-not "if"-and on the skills that you do have to make it happen.
- Many of the skills you have used to meet challenges in the past-such as defining a goal and achieving it with determination-will also help you quit.



# Facing your roadblocks and focusing on success

## It's okay to have doubts.

Quitting smoking is about making a change in your life. It's about walking away from something that may have been part of your life for a long time—something you have come to depend on. You may be worried about how hard it might be, about reactions from friends who still smoke, about giving up time to yourself, about gaining weight, or even about losing a part of who you are. It's normal to have doubts. But remember...

## Every challenge has a solution.

Quitting isn't one big challenge—it's a series of small ones. You can meet each one, including cravings, with clear thinking.

- Smoking doesn't really help you relax, it's just something you're used to doing while you take a break.
- The average weight gain for people who quit is about five to six pounds—healthy eating and active living will help you shed those pounds once you are feeling good about yourself as a non-smoker.
- Your friendships don't depend on smoking—there is much more to true friendship than that! Furthermore, your self-confidence will improve when you quit smoking.

## Every step is a success.

You are never too old or too addicted to quit. Deciding to quit, taking the first step and continuing to try are all things to be proud of and feel good about. They are as much a part of your success as actually living smokefree. Because with quitting, as with every form of positive change, success isn't something you find, it's something you create, day by day. In time, small changes can lead to big transformations—like a smokefree life!

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[www.GoSmokefree.ca](http://www.GoSmokefree.ca)

Health Canada's Web site also offers a free 30-day e-mail message service called *e-Quit* that has already helped thousands of smokers. The program is based on the material in this guide.



# Dealing with stress

## Many smokers try to cope with stress by smoking.

While smoking can provide a short burst of energy or bring about a temporary calm, in the long run it actually increases stress. For example, the nicotine in tobacco causes your heart rate and blood pressure to increase.

## Trying to stop smoking can be a source of stress

as you try to deal with withdrawal and cravings. Just the prospect of having to change your routine can be stressful. Some people describe quitting smoking like losing an old friend, so it is no wonder you feel stressed.

## There are several positive ways to overcome stress.

Finding one or two people to talk to or keeping a journal allows you to explore solutions instead of dwelling on your problems. Try relaxing by listening to some soft music or taking a lingering bath or going for a massage. Maintain a healthy diet and take time to eat proper meals at regular intervals. Becoming more physically active helps to release calming chemicals in the brain and promotes better sleep.

## Learn to deep breathe.

Take a slow deep breath in through your nose and hold it for a count of five. Push your tummy out at the same time. This makes the air go deeper into your lungs, where the smoke used to go. Slowly breathe out through your mouth to the count of seven. Repeat this three times, and feel the relaxation as your stress drops away.



# ARE YOU READY TO TAKE THE NEXT STEP?

## Tracking Card

When the chart is complete, use it to answer these questions:

About how much do you smoke each day?

What time of day do you usually smoke?

When do you usually smoke your first cigarette of the day?

What places do you smoke in the most?

Could you avoid these places for a couple of weeks after you quit smoking?

Do you tend to smoke around certain people?

Would you feel comfortable asking them for help to quit smoking?

Do you have friends that you don't smoke around?

Would it be possible to hang around these people more often during the time you are trying to quit?

Do you feel a certain way before, during or after you smoke?

Are there ways, other than smoking, that would help you deal with negative feelings or produce positive feelings?

How many times did you smoke, even when you didn't have a strong desire to?

Which cigarettes are most important to you?

## Instructions:

Fold this card and put it in your cigarette package or another convenient place.

Record every cigarette you smoke until the chart is complete.

For the column marked "Mood", put:

**G** If your mood was good or happy before you smoked

**S** If you were in a bad mood, angry or sad before you smoked

**?** If you're not sure how you felt before you smoked

For the column marked "Rate", put in a number between 1 and 5 where:

**1** = I could have done without this smoke

**5** = I really had to have this cigarette

If you are ready to quit, the next section will help you follow through!

If you are not, you may need more time to think and decide. Review this guide in a couple of weeks. In the meantime, if you can, visit Health Canada's Web site at [GoSmokefree.ca](http://GoSmokefree.ca) and have a look at the online version of *On the Road to Quitting*. It offers an interactive tool you can use to create a customized picture of why you smoke and how you can stop.





## Did you know?

- People who put their commitments in writing-and who tell others what they plan to do-tend to be more successful in meeting their goals than those who do not.
- Setting a quit date confirms your commitment. It will focus your preparations on a definite goal.
- A good quit date should give you time to prepare, but not enough to let you get distracted or have second thoughts.



# Set a date!

Now that you are ready to quit, you need to make a commitment.

Choose the right time. Think about the activities you have planned for the next few weeks. Choose a time when you will not be too stressed. For example, find a week when you have no major deadlines at work or home. You may want to begin on a weekend so you can plan some activities that will keep your mind off cigarettes. If you are a woman, *don't* pick a date immediately before your period.

Remember that it is unlikely there will ever be a perfect day to quit smoking.

Instead of continuously putting off your quit date, use unexpected circumstances to your advantage. For example, sometimes having to deliver a big project can help distract you from cravings and urges to smoke. If you are going through a stressful period, remind yourself that smoking actually increases the effects of stress by increasing heart rate and breathing. Over the longer term, quitting will reduce your stress.

Pick your quit date and write it down.

Choose a date no more than three weeks from today. Mark it on every calendar. Look at it every day as a reminder. Each time you do, remember that it's an opportunity. Think about all the reasons you want to quit, and all that you have to gain.

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Having a specific action plan can improve your chances of quitting smoking for good.

A good plan should be written down because it requires you to think more carefully about what you need to do and how you will do it. You can find some tips about preparing your own action plan in the last section of this guide.



## Did you know?

- Support from your friends and family members can make a real difference to your success!
- Your friends who smoke will probably understand why you need to avoid being around smoke, at least for a while.
- Many municipalities have quit-smoking support groups. Call your public health office for information.



# Plan to get support

## Tell others that you are going to quit.

If you keep it to yourself, it may be easier to change your mind. Telling your family, friends and co-workers gives you another reason to stay focused, and will encourage them to help you when you need support. Tell friends who smoke about your decision. They are sure to understand.

## Choose a quit buddy.

You might want to talk with someone if you need extra help to resist the urge to smoke. Tell a close non-smoking friend what you plan to do. Explain that you might call upon them for support.

## You might consider therapies, especially if you have already tried to quit.

Nicotine replacements like gum and patches can help you with cravings. You use nicotine gum to control cravings one at a time. Patches keep a controlled amount of nicotine in your system at all times for up to three months. Both are available without a prescription. Other medications like Zyban™ (an antidepressant in pill form that has been found to help people with nicotine withdrawal) can also be effective but they must be prescribed by your doctor and started at least a week before you quit.

There are toll-free **telephone quit-lines** available in most parts of Canada. The numbers are listed on our Web site at [GoSmokefree.ca](http://GoSmokefree.ca) or you can call 1-866-318-1116 for more information.

## Prepare for your quit day by:

- Avoiding triggers
- Planning for difficult situations
- Practicing how you will work through cravings in the first few days after you quit





# Choose the quit method that's right for you

## Many people quit "cold turkey."

That means taking the time to understand why and when you smoke, preparing mentally to break the patterns and deal with withdrawal, then stopping all at once. This may be right for you if you tend to like making dramatic, all-or-nothing changes.

## Some prefer to gradually cut back.

This means slowly reducing the amount you normally smoke as you move closer to your quit day. Cutting back allows you to get a sense of what it will be like to quit for good. It gives you the chance to solve a few challenges at a time instead of all at once.

## There are many ways to cut back.

The easiest cigarettes to cut out are the ones you don't need. Each time you reach for a cigarette, stop and think: "Do I really need it?" Wait five or ten minutes before acting on your urge to smoke. Smoke less of each cigarette than you normally would. Start to "ration" your cigarettes by carrying only enough to get you through a normal day, and refusing to get more. Every day or two, reduce that amount. Cut down as far as you can. Try delaying your first cigarette of the day or eliminate cigarettes at various other times such as at afternoon break or after supper.

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## How do you make decisions?

Think of one or more significant decisions or changes you have made quickly and completely. Then name one or two decisions or changes you have made after thinking, testing and practicing for some time. Which ones have been most successful? Why?

Use this self-analysis technique to choose the quit method that best suits your personal style.



## Prepare for your quit day by:

- Using your Tracking Card to analyse your triggers and smoking routines
- Making a list of all the things you normally do when you smoke
- Trying to change just one or two of these routines



# Getting ready for your quit day

## Start thinking positively.

Instead of saying "I will not," try another approach so that you can say "I will." For example, if you normally smoke after dinner, you could say: "Right after dinner tonight, I will go for a short walk." Remember the encouragement you've already received from those you told about your plan to quit smoking.

## Plan to reward yourself.

Each day and week without tobacco is worth celebrating. Think of a few things you would really like to have or do that you could "earn" by staying smokefree. Consider putting the money you would have spent on cigarettes in a "piggy bank" or jar. Use it to treat yourself in big or small ways.

## Over time, the things you normally do while you are smoking have become "triggers."

Like other reminders, such as the sight or smell of a cigarette or a certain time of the day, they automatically make you want to light up. Breaking those routines can give you the confidence and motivation you need to change more.



## Did you know?

- Positive thoughts about the benefits of quitting as you go to bed and as you get up can help "program" you for success during the day.
- Confidence and success are the rewards of good preparation, a positive attitude and a firm commitment.
- Reviewing what you have learned will help you feel great about your decision, and reinforce your motivation to follow through.



# Review and prepare

Take some time to review what you have learned.

Remember your smoking “triggers” and when they are likely to happen. Prepare to face them, and remember what you plan to do instead of smoking.

On the day before you quit, tell yourself that tomorrow, you will be a non-smoker.

Remind your family members, and ask them to understand if you seem tense and irritable. Remind yourself that you have what it takes to succeed.

Scan your calendar for events or circumstances that you think might tempt you to start smoking.

Are there any periods of high stress? Will you be going out or spending time with a friend or family member who reminds you of smoking? For each tempting situation, think of at least three things you can do to cope like avoiding the situation or doing something that is incompatible with smoking (for example, choosing a non-smoking restaurant).

**Before you go to bed...**

Throw out *all* of your cigarettes. Do not keep any for “emergencies.” Throw away your ashtrays too!



## Remember...

- Cravings come in waves and rarely last more than a few minutes.
- Avoiding the sight and smell of cigarettes makes it much easier to deal with cravings and resist urges.
- Thinking of yourself as a non-smoker is one of the keys to *becoming* a non-smoker.



# Quitting day- your new beginning!

## Congratulations!

Today is the first day of your healthier, better, smokefree life. Celebrate it. Be proud of yourself. You have taken the steps to learn and prepare. You are doing the right thing. Now you are ready to enjoy all the benefits of being a non-smoker.

## Take it easy.

Quitting could seem stressful over the next few days. Make it easy on yourself. Take some time for yourself. Try to avoid or walk away from situations that give you more stress. Among other things, avoid places where you might see and smell cigarettes.

## Do whatever it takes to cope with cravings.

Think beyond them. Work through them (delay, distract, drink water, breathe deeply). Remember that every urge will pass, and that you will feel stronger after every one. They will get shorter and easier every day.

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## How does it feel?

How did it feel at the end of the day, knowing you didn't smoke? If you slipped, don't panic or feel too guilty. A slip or two does not mean that you have failed. It just means you're vulnerable. Look at what triggered the slip and figure out how to handle it differently tomorrow.

Remember what's most important and stay focussed on your goal.

- For urges and cravings: distract yourself with other thoughts and activities, breathe deeply, and drink water.
- For thoughts and excuses: recognize that it's the nicotine talking and refuse to listen. Refuse to be fooled.
- For feelings of restlessness or irritability: recognize that these are signs of healing.





# Dealing with withdrawal

Smoking has conditioned your body to depend on nicotine.

After you quit, the brain will continue to crave nicotine, and you will probably experience some symptoms of withdrawal. These include urges to smoke; thoughts about having "just one"; and feeling restless, irritable, frustrated or uncomfortable. You may also have difficulty concentrating, experience coughing, mild depression or have trouble sleeping for a while.

Accept the fact that they are going to happen.

However, urges rarely last more than a few minutes and the other symptoms seldom last for more than ten days. Think of each one as a bridge you have to cross to reach the reward on the other side. Prepare to think past them, work through them. Remember that they are temporary, while the benefits of quitting will be with you for life. Remind yourself that you've worked hard to prepare and that you will succeed!

## How long does withdrawal last?

For many people, withdrawal is at its worst for the first few days and then it begins to lessen after 3 or 4 days. After a week to 10 days all withdrawal symptoms should be gone. Your main task in quitting is to find a way to get through the first few days. If you do, you have a much better chance of succeeding for good.





# Be positive. Stay focussed.

## You can and will succeed!

Each day without cigarettes will get easier. Each day without cigarettes will make you stronger. Each day without cigarettes is worth celebrating. So, each and every day for the next month:

- **Remember you are a non-smoker.** You do not smoke. Make this your first and last conscious thought of every day. Remind yourself every time you see someone else with a cigarette.
- **Review your reasons for quitting,** your responses to your concerns, and your strategies for coping with urges and other withdrawal symptoms. Avoid doing any of the things you strongly associate with smoking.
- **Try to go for short walks.** Focus on the pleasure of breathing clean, smokefree air—it's helping to heal your heart and lungs.
- **Be proud of yourself.** Continue to think positively about the change you have made. Don't worry if you feel a little "down" for a few days—that's a sign of nicotine withdrawal. Remind yourself that you can do this, that it takes a bit of time to heal, and that you are getting healthier and stronger every day.
- **Reward yourself.** Every day, indulge yourself with some time, activities or things that are just for you. If you have made a savings jar as one of your rewards, add to it every day and watch those savings grow!

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**If you need extra help or more information** in the days and weeks ahead, call your public health office or visit the Health Canada Web site at [GoSmokefree.ca](http://GoSmokefree.ca) for a list of toll-free quit-line services.





# Why do some people gain weight after quitting?

People gain weight for a lot of reasons.

For example, after you stop smoking, you may be tempted to eat more because your food will smell and taste better. You may eat as a substitute for keeping your hands or mouth busy. You may also gain weight because nicotine is a stimulant that artificially increases your metabolism. Sometimes people gain weight because they feel hungrier after they quit smoking. Finally, you may gain weight because subconsciously you believe you have a legitimate reason for doing so.

What can you do to reduce the chances of weight gain?

You will be less likely to gain weight if you don't change your diet, stick to very low-cal snacks and increase exercise or physical activities. Using the nicotine patch or gum or Bupropion (Zyban) as part of your quit attempt may also slow weight gain. Individuals who are more physically active before they stop smoking are also much less likely to gain weight.

What about a diet?

Some people are able to make several lifestyle changes at the same time. However, most people find it easier to tackle one challenge at a time. Try to maintain your usual diet or snack on healthier foods. If you do gain weight, try losing it by adopting healthy eating behaviours and increasing physical activity patterns.



# CREATE YOUR OWN ACTION PLAN

Having a specific action plan can improve your chances of quitting smoking for good.

Here are some specific suggestions on how to develop your plan.

## 1. Write a clear statement about why you are stopping smoking.

Indicate who else will benefit from your decision to quit. Try to imagine how you will look. How will you feel about yourself? For example, you may want to quit because you are tired of coughing all the time. You may want to quit to set a good example for children.

## 2. List your concerns about quitting.

Next to each concern write down one or more things you will do to overcome this challenge.

## 3. Prepare for withdrawal.

Take a moment to write down one or two strategies you can use to deal with each withdrawal symptom, in case it happens to you. Being able to recognize withdrawal symptoms will also help you to remember that the effect is only temporary.

## 4. Acknowledge the skills and knowledge you already have.

Think about the times you've gone without smoking in the past. What did you do to keep yourself from smoking? Which of these strategies seemed to be most helpful? Have you become more physically active, changed your diet, started wearing your seat belt, stopped putting things off? How did you do it? Could these skills help you to change your smoking behaviour?



### 5. Identify your social support.

Most people underestimate the support they think they will get from their family and friends. List the people you can count on to help you. Who can you call for encouragement? Who will help distract you when you crave a smoke? Who can help you avoid tempting situations?

### 6. Identify your smoking patterns and triggers.

Before you quit, use your Tracking Card to record how much you smoke, where you were when you smoked, who you were with, as well as what you were thinking, feeling and doing immediately before, during and after you smoked. Review the notes after one week to see if you can find any patterns to your smoking. For example, does the amount you smoke change according to who you were with, where you were, what you were doing or how you were feeling?

### 7. Determine how to change the things that remind you of smoking.

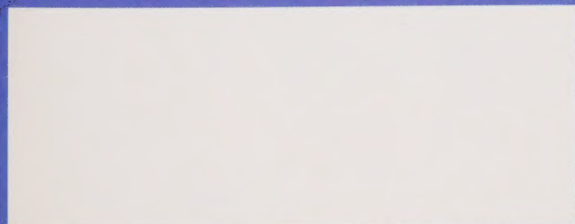
If coffee reminds you of smoking, switch to tea or juice. If you tend to smoke in a certain chair, sit in another chair or go outside.

### 8. Set a quit date.

The final step of your quit plan should be to set a date to begin your life without cigarettes. Try to pick a specific date within the next few weeks.

### 9. Put the date in writing!

I have committed to stop smoking on \_\_\_\_\_. On that day, and on each day afterwards, I will not smoke. I will do whatever it takes to keep this promise so I can have a new and better life without cigarettes.



Your signature here



# YOU'LL BE GLAD YOU QUIT SMOKING!

- You will feel much more in control of your decisions, actions and health.
- You will gain a sense of pride and accomplishment that will enhance your self-confidence.
- You will be able to enjoy sports and other physical activities with more strength and endurance.
- You won't have to worry about your health so much.
- You won't have to worry that the mucous or scratchiness in your throat is a sign of serious smoking disease.
- You will look and feel younger. Smoking causes premature aging and wrinkling of the skin. Quitting will help restore your look of good health.
- You will never again have to feel guilty or uncomfortable about smoking.
- You will join the vast majority who have accepted the value and pleasure of living smokefree.

[www.GoSmokefree.ca](http://www.GoSmokefree.ca)